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ABSTRACT

This paper describes experiences of the Documentation and Technical Assistance Project (Chicago, Illinois) in helping schools to improve their problem solving capacities through the use of cognitive frameworks (shared meanings that people use to interpret their world). The paper discusses two projects that illustrate how shared frameworks have functioned in school problem solving: (1) New York City's Responsive Education Project, which sought to enhance school improvement by providing activities that would enable teachers to understand the concept that children can learn optimally if their environment is structured to promote learning; and (2) the San Andreas Cultural Continuity Project, which aimed to raise school staff and community consciousness concerning the concept that discontinuities exist between the culture of the schools and that of black children. As a point of contrast, the paper also describes the School Self Improvement Project in New York, which emphasized organizational development rather than cognitive frameworks as an approach for school improvement. It is suggested that technical assistance groups that seek to assist urban school staff in systematically using shared cognitive frameworks should: (1) be clear about the framework; (2) have credibility; (3) be easily available to schools; (4) encourage voluntarism and community participation; and (5) utilize planned techniques. (Author/MJL)

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REFORMING SCHOOLS

BY WORKING WITH COGNITIVE FRAMEWORKS

Stephen H. Wilson

November, 1979

UD 022 750

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PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Documentation and Technical Assistance in Urban Schools Project (DTA) is an effort to learn more about how to make urban public schools work better for urban students. Toward this end, DTA combines educational research and practice within one project. DTA's mandate has three interrelated parts:

> DOCUMENTATION - to study, using primarily ethnographic techniques, the ways in which selected urban schools organize themselves to solve problems. Documentation focuses upon nine sites throughout the country selected and funded by NIE to continue to engage in locally initiated improvement activities.
>
> TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE - to develop in practice specific strategies which are designed to improve urban public schooling. Technical assistance strategies are based in part upon documentation of useful practices in the nine funded sites.
>
> LINKAGE - to increase understanding, through observation of DTA's attempts to link documentation with technical assistance, of the processes through which research can be useful to practice, and practice can influence research.

Our work is designed to effect school improvement through direct work in urban public schools and through sharing what we learn with the following audiences: parents, teachers, and administrators of urban public schools; the educational research community; groups or agencies working to assist urban schools; policy makers.

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Introduction

Many attempts to improve urban schools concentrate on the introduction of a particular curricular or teaching innovation. Some analysts (e.g. NIE, 73) believe, however, that the long term improvement of urban schools depends on basic structural changes which would give the schools sustained capacities for problem solving enabling them to contend with the changing contexts, problems and opportunities that are typical of urban settings. In 1974, the National Institute of Education held a national competition to identify the most promising locally initiated strategies for developing these capacities. They funded the Documentation and Technical Assistance Project (DTA) to study these local projects in order to better understand what capacities for problem solving are and how assistors working with urban school communities might stimulate the development of these capacities.

DTA discovered that there are several kinds of structural changes which offer some promise of supporting ongoing problem so'ving. Several of these are well explored in the literature - e.g. organizational development (Schmuck and Runkel, 1972) and school-community connections (Davies, 1976). Some of the sites emphasized approaches not extensively treated in the literature - for example, the importance of shared cognitive frameworks as an improvement stimulating feature of urban school/communities. Observation of these sites suggested that emphasis on cognitive frameworks did promote on-going problem solving. We believe the approach has great potential.

This paper analyzes how assistors in some sites worked with participants to develop consensually accepted cognitive frameworks and to use them in the on-going improvement of the schools.

Cognitive frameworks may be a term that is not familiar in discussions of school change. A companion paper, "An Analysis of the Concept of Shared Cognitive Frameworks as a Key to Promoting School Improvement" explores the meaning of cognitive frameworks in detail and reviews the relevant literature. This paper should be consulted if the reader wants more than we present here. By cognitive frameworks we mean the shared meanings a group of people use for interpreting their world. These shared meanings guide people's perceptions, allow them to communicate with each other, provide explanations for events and help people to understand connections between seemingly disparate happenings.

Human beings don't function without using frameworks to make sense of their worlds and they simultaneously use many frameworks derived from the various social groupings of which they are part. In some of the sites we studied, the assistors believe that this haphazard process of using multiple frameworks was inadequate and that great power for the sustained improvement of school communities could be derived from systematic attention to cognitive frameworks.

They believed they had cognitive frameworks which comprehensively explained the world of urban schools and would serve in the long term to effectively identify problems, causes, and solutions. They worked with participants to help them to incorporate these frameworks and to develop a style of action which used frameworks in a disciplined way to interpret events and to plan and carry out actions. Frameworks, as they used them, were not merely intellectually accepted theories about schools, but rather were deeper patterns which became a part of the way participants saw and acted in the world.

Most assistors working to improve the schools have concentrated on making changes in the structure or social organization of schools or in teaching participants new techniques. Assistors concentrating on cognitive frameworks often must work in a different way. This paper summarizes and analyzes characteristics we observed about this kind of assistance.

Assistors who emphasized frameworks were extremely clear about their frameworks and were out daily in the participants' contexts showing how the framework helped to explain events and to plan effective action. The deep and personal nature of frameworks seemd to require that the assistors have a special kind of credibility before participants would work with them. Finally we note that an assistance strategy emphasizing frameworks may face problems in that its influence may be limited only to those participants who volunteer to undergo the intensive involvement required.

In the last section of this paper we describe and analyze these observations in more detail. First, we describe our research process and then briefly but concretely describe three sites' activities as they relate to an emphasis on cognitive frameworks.

Data and Research Process

Our analysis is based on data collected in nine school improvement projects selected by the National Institute of Education as promising examples of attempts to build capacities for problem solving. DTA conducted qualitative case study research of these projects. The data consist of case study drafts written by site researchers in those sites, field data forms (condensation of field notes), site-produced documents, verbal reports by researchers, and some limited first hand observation and interviews by the author. In this paper I concentrate on three sites.

DTA stressed the development of grounded theory. For example, we did not start out with the intention of testing the importance of cognitive frameworks in on-going problem solving. Rather, the relevance and potential power of this concept emerged through consideration of how people in the sites saw their worlds and through early analysis of preliminary observations. (For a general description of the process of generating grounded theory, see Glaser and Strauss, 1967.) As with all grounded theory, the process of on-going theory generation is a mixed blessing. On one hand, because the concept "arose" from the data, we have confidence in its validity and genuineness. On the other hand, because we did not design the study specifically to explore cognitive frameworks, we often have incomplete data and have not been able to refine our ideas as far as we would have liked. The fact that this paper is based on secondary analysis of data gathered by others must also be kept in mind. This paper should be thought of as exploratory rather than definitive. We are left with many questions, but we feel it is worth sharing what we know at this point. For more on the nine sites, the design of the research and the secondary analysis process, see the methodology appendix of the paper "Explorations of the Paradigm Local Capacities for Problem Solving" (Wilson, 1977).

Section II: DESCRIPTION OF SITES

Specific emphasis on cognitive frameworks was a major feature of two projects we studied -- The San Andreas Cultural Continuity Project and the Responsive Education Project in New York City. In this section we offer a brief description and analysis of events in these projects relating to our focus on cognitive frameworks. For further and more detailed descriptions of these projects, see Smith, 1979; Karunakaran, 1977.

In addition to these two sites, we will also offer a brief description of the School Self Improvement Project (SSI) in New York City (Davis, 1977). In contrast to the other two, SSI provides an example of a site that focused successfully on something other than cognitive frameworks. SSI is one of the better examples of a focus shared by many of the sites we studied --variations on organizational development approaches. We point out what the site was able to accomplish without a focus on cognitive frameworks and several places where problems may have developed because it did not have this focus.

These brief descriptions concretely illustrate the way shared frameworks have functioned in school problem solving. They describe the content of the specific frameworks and also how the focus on these frameworks has influenced actions in the sites. The descriptions also illustrate some of the problems involved in using an emphasis on frameworks as a key feature to promote problem solving efforts.

A. The Responsive Education Project -- New York City*

The Responsive Education Project sought to enhance the way teachers, parents, and children interact. The central analysis underlying the project was a belief that human beings have natural growth tendencies which will result in optimum development if the environment is structured in such a way as to enhance rather than inhibit that development. Most schools are seen as not tuned in at all to how children develop -- for example, in their homogenous grouping which limits possibilities for learning from peers, in their discouragement of exploration, in their depreciation of the learning value of out-of-school experiences and natural objects, in their lack of genuine respect for individual patterns of needs, strengths, interest, etc. Likewise, schools are seen as not structured in such a way as to really facilitate the professional growth of teachers.

One of the main thrusts of the project was to help teachers (and others who came in contact with children) learn this framework for understanding the natural tendencies of children to explore and grow when the environment does not inhibit them and to help teachers learn to apply it in interpreting events and guiding their actions. Core staff seemed to make a basic assumption that the long-term solution of the basic problems regarding the education of children is dependent upon a widespread understanding of these fundamental notions about development and learning and the ability to use this understanding to shape day to day activities and react to larger events. Actions taken without this framework are doomed to be less effective.

*For more detailed description of this site see Karr[illegible]karan, 1977.

The project went about its work by a combination of activities centered at a university based teacher center and in small communities of teachers and parents in the schools. The teacher center, located at a large university, provided resources and workshops and other learning experiences for teachers, pre-service teachers, paraprofessionals, parents and administrators. Small "corridor communities" existed in several elementary schools in one area of New York. In some schools they involved only two or three classrooms; in other schools there were several small communities involving most of the classrooms in a school. DTA focused our observations at the two schools where the communities included most of the school's classrooms.

Project staff included the principal investigator and several others who were called advisors. These advisors were master teachers who worked with the members of these small communities to improve the quality of education in the schools. They met regularly with parents and teachers both individually and in groups. We focus in this paper on the activities of the small communities. Usually these communities had joint meetings of teachers and parents and sometimes separate meetings. These meetings were regular (often weekly or even more frequent). The participants, which sometimes included advisors and sometimes did not, spent time learning about theories and techniques related to the project's view about learning and development, analyzing events in their day to day activities with children to understand better about development and their impact on it, designing new activities to capitalize on what they have learned about children's learning, designing activities to learn

more about children, analyzing larger social events and trends to assess their potential influence on their ability to create the learning environments they seek, and planning actions to influence the larger context. Even the format for these meetings provided experiential learning relevant to the framework they were elaborating -- e.g. the groups were structured so there was great respect for what they can learn from each other and participants were encouraged to take an active inquiring stance towards events in their environment.

There are difficult obstacles in assessing how important the existance of the framework was relative to the importance of other features of these school communities. For instance, other important qualities include the structure of teacher interaction, physical structure of classroom groupings, the existence of master teacher-advisors in regular contact with classroom teacher, the building of craft sentiments about teaching, the prestige of the university teacher center and the project director, the political activities of the "sophisticated" parents in these schools, and the support offered by principals.

Nonetheless, we believe the shared framework was an influential part of this project's ability to create situations in schools which generate and sustain improvement activities. The framework provided a unifying purpose to teacher interactions and served as a rallying point for political action. It helped people to be mindful of action they contemplated when they planned curriculum or class activities, when they reacted to larger school issues, and when they reacted to social issues.

Parents and teachers actively inspected events at their schools. They did not merely accept even what looked like positive occurrences--they asked of each proposed activity whether it would contribute to the active learning environment they sought to create.

> At a breakfast for parents, several complained to project advisors that the school was talking about acquiring science kits for children. Some teachers were talking about "giving science and math" lessons".
>
> The parents saw this as a throw back to the pre-packaged days. The notions of kits and special science lessons was seen as being in opposition to the idea of a more integrated project approach where children learn about their world in all its aspects including science.

The groups also sought to interpret larger educational trends and to understand the implications of these trends so they could act effectively when presented an opportunity.

> Project staff and teachers were discussing concepts of mental health. The project director criticized the use of medical and scientific terms -- e.g. "hyperactive" -- because these terms mystify what is going on and distance people from the real phenomena. She also showed how the deficit model of viewing children is at odds with their model which stresses the great diversity of skills that are necessary for living and the fact that every child has a pattern of strengths and weaknesses that the classroom should address. She stressed the importance of heterogeneity and points out that the whole structure of specialists in the schools is built on the deficit model. (A deficit model emphasizes certain critical lacks and tries to remediate them rather than emphasizing the total pattern of a child's strengths and weaknesses.)

*In this paper we have adopted the convention of setting off descriptions of sequences of events or direct expressions which are samples of the data upon which our analysis is based. Direct quotas have quotation marks.

These examples are just a few of the many possible from the site illustrating the way the cognitive framework about human development, and what is necessary to create environments which facilitate development, sustains processes of improvement. Those participating in this project seemed to have a well elaborated sense of the direction they were moving in and had tools for deciding when some course of action would aid in their movement and when it would hinder them.

There are major issues that must be confronted before one can assert that cognitive frameworks are absolutely essential in sustaining problem solving in The Responsive Education Project:

-- Would any cognitive framework which attempted to tie teaching-learning and human development together function with the same power as this one?

-- Would any site that supported regular interactions between teachers and provided them with immediate resources and advice be as successful even without the underlying cognitive framework?

-- Since the basis of this approach is voluntarism, participants must actively choose to accept the core concepts of the framework. It is possible that the very emphasis on elaborating cognitive frameworks that makes this approach effective may also limit the scope of its appeal.

B. The San Andreas Cultural Continuity Project*

As the project name implies, the Cultural Continuity Project believed that schools serving black students could best be improved by more closely reflecting the aspirations, styles, values, and strengths of the culture of the black community. The project staff believed that schools, and the

*For more detail see Smith, 1979.

mainstream society they reflect, are indifferent or even hostile to the concerns of the black community because of racism. If the schools are to reflect the strengths and desires of the community, parents and teachers must be educated to see the problems and possible solutions available.

The project staff thus worked with both educators and parents to raise consciousness concerning both the existence of cultural discontinuities and ways of addressing the problems raised. The project staff offered workshops for the educators, aimed primarily at guiding them to better understand black culture and better serve black students.

With parents, the work focused on raising consciousness about the cultural discontinuity, teaching parents effective skills for political action, and helping them to establish structures to better ensure themselves a role in influencing school actions and decisions. A small group of paid parents formed a cadre that met weekly for analysis and action. For example, the staff helped the parents to identify what the real problems were (including things others might not see as problems at all), to see interconnections between events, and to plan actions based on the shared framework or interpretation.

A typical comment made in a cadre meeting illustrates the cadre members conviction that the framework they have been learning is important enough to share with other parents.

> "Many parents don't know what you mean when you say community control. They think in terms of what kind of school we already have. They don't think of alternatives to the present situation."

The cadre members spent considerable energy analyzing the strengths of the black community and the disparity between the culture of the schools and that of the students. They were then able to make such concrete suggestions as improving the cultural appropriateness of the food served in the school cafeterias so that students would eat the meals served.

The cadre also sought to understand the power issues underlying the discontinuity of the two cultures. For example:

> The cadre discussed the importance of student self-evaluation because they felt teachers tended to automatically promote black students even when they had not learned anything. Parents agreed on the importance of genuine learning if the students were to be able to help themselves and their community.

Parents also learned to understand the larger world in terms of denial of power to black people and how to take effective action.

> The cadre engaged in a sequence of activities to learn to make themselves more effective at public meetings. They regularly attended meetings related to the schools and debriefed together later to reflect on what had gone on. In one early debriefing session parents started off by talking about refreshments and what people wore. A project staff member led the parent consultants to see why these were not the important issues.

The next set of activities were designed to make parents aware of how things work in the larger political arena. These can be seen as part

of the pattern of increasing the cadre members' ability to understand the the world in terms of the denial of power to black people and to take effective action. These activities could also be looked at as political skill training not necessarily related to any framework. Often, however, the skill training was infused with a sense that this knowledge was especially important for blacks because of the American traditions of disenfranchisement.

> They surveyed the community to identify agencies which might have resources to help the schools in their work. They analyzed why these agencies never initiated activities. They strategized how to stimulate more initiative.

As these examples have illustrated, the cadre's foci were wide-ranging. Their struggle to understand the world, to share their interpretations and to learn from them, and to plan, execute, and evaluate actions within their framework impelled and organized their problem solving activities. Again, questions could be asked about how important was the stress on frameworks relative to other features of this strategy. It seemed as though these cadre members would continue to try to solve the problems of the schools as they saw them long after the funding of this particular project stopped and that the shared framework which the helpers had assisted them to elaborate would be a major sustaining force in the struggle.

C. School Self Improvement Project (SSI) New York

We turn now to a site in which a shared framework was not a major emphasized feature. The School Self Improvement Project did, nonetheless, manage to stimulate improvement actions. By contrasting this site with the two previous sites, we believe we can refine the notions of cognitive frameworks. The contrast is also important because the organizational development model it represents is a more popular approach to conceptualizing what is necessary for sustained problem solving in school organizations than the focus on cognitive frameworks. (Several of the other projects we studied had elements of this model at their core).

The SSI project is based on an analysis that schools have most of the resources necessary to solve their problems. What they lack is organization --the norms, structures and processes necessary to motivate and coordinate self-improvement activities.

There are several key elements to this belief. Widespread participation is necessary in order to tap the variety of resources the participants themselves can offer and in order to increase "ownership" and commitment to actions undertaken. Attitudes valuing group work and skills of group work--e.g. communication, conflict management, clarifying leadership,--are necessary for organizational groups to work effectively. Systematic processes of planning need to be learned and valued. In the previous two projects described, effective group work was certainly also seen as important, but not much energy was focused specifically on improving the techniques of group work per se.

The SSI project was sponsored by the service wing of a coalition of businessmen concerned about the failure of the schools to turn out competent citizens and workers. The project was composed of a principal investigator and a staff of professionals skilled in organizational consultation. This staff had good contacts in the bureaucracy of the schools. They won the commitment of key members of the Department of Secondary Education and of principals in the high schools.

When the project began, the improvement committee surveyed various constituent groups in particular schools to identify what they saw as problems facing the school. Priorities were assigned to the problems, and goals were agreed upon. A program review committee was established to guide the process. Problems were diagnosed and groups formed to work on proposed solutions. Outside information sources were consulted for help in the solutions. The program review committees judged the appropriateness and probable effectiveness of the solution. Money and time were given by SSI to teachers for the sake of developing and implementing the solutions.

After implementation, effectiveness of the attempted programs was evaluated and the programs were continued, revised, or new programs planned. The process did not necessarily work exactly this way in all the schools the project worked in, but this was the general design. SSI supported the process by lobbying with the bureaucracy for their support and commitment to self improvement activities, by offering training and consultants to the coordinators and other staff of the schools and by providing money and time resources to support programs. In what ways was and was not the sharing and elaboration of cognitive frameworks important to this self improvement process, as practiced by the SSI project (and by implication to other similar efforts).

The fundamental rationales behind this approach* (notably bliefs about what kind of human interactions resulted in the most successful task completion and fulfillment and about what kind of systematic process is necessary for organizational accomplishment), could be looked at as a cognitive framework. These perspectives offer some committed adherents ways of interpreting the world and planning actions. When they see events in schools which turn out badly, they can explain them partially in terms of the human and organizational processes that led up to them. How then is this framework functionally any different than the previous two we have discussed? We have noted the following points of contrast.

Those who hold these beliefs do not seem to emphasize the sharing and elaboration of the framework as absolutely essential to accomplishments in the school. While they seem to feel that it would be beneficial for organizational members to understand these points of view and to interpret events from these perspectives, they do not seem to feel it is essential that everyone buy into this point of view. Much can be accomplished simply by teaching organizational members patterns of group communication and planning behavior and by helping them to come to value acting in these ways--e.g., to be open with reactions and to attack problems systematically.

*Please note that because the SSI project exemplified a more general organizational development model, this section includes both specific of the SSI project and discussion of the more general model.

Those who hold this perspective emphasizing organizational development usually do not claim that their perspective can explain large portions of what happens in schools. Indeed, they believe there are a multitude of frameworks organizational members bring to explaining what happens and to proposing solutions. In fact, they feel that this variety of perspectives is a major resource to the organization in its ability to have available many solutions to problems and to adapt to changing environments. They see one of the chief powers of their approach to be its ability to coordinate the actions of persons with diverse perspectives.

Our observations of a range of sites--some of which emphasized shared frameworks and some which did not, suggest there are trade offs either way. Those which emphasized frameworks--e.g. the Cultural Continuity and the Responsive Education projects did have limits on who they could reach. In order for people to participate in their improvement activities, they had to buy into the frameworks at the core of the projects. Hence, many teachers and parents in each setting did not get involved. An organizational development approach would not have had that particular obstacle to participation. Similarly one gets the feeling that there were ranges of problem formulations and possible solutions that were not considered in each of these projects because of the concentration in their particular frameworks. They may have sacrificed some scope for depth.

The organizational development approaches had other kinds of weaknesses --in our opinion possibly more severe. This approach to coordinating diverse perspectives does not focus on helping people to grow in their ability to sense problems. It solicits peoples' already existing ideas rather than

helping them to refine them. It does not add to their power to fit problems and solutions into comprehensive frameworks.

Organizational development approaches usually have a crucial stage where relevant actors work together to reach agreements about goals and priorities as described in the SSI approach. At the several sites we have observed there seem to be crucial problems in this process. Even though there is often widespread participation in proposing problems and voting in setting priorities, no real consensus seems to result. Site researchers (e.g., Clark, 1977) report that most teachers feel that the priorities do not represent their real nitty gritty concerns. Even when there are elaborate group processes of discussing and diagnosing problems and arriving at priorities, an underlying basis of consensus seems to be missing. Once back in the day-to-day realities of their classrooms or confronted with changing conditions, teachers feel the group agreements somehow miss the mark.

The approaches which emphasize elaboration of frameworks have built in safeguards against superficial agreement. The joint intense analysis of problems and of shared experience which is part of these approaches has a better chance of resulting in genuine consensus. The process of coming to agreement about what is important is not restricted to a few special meetings focusing on problems but rather is integrated in the daily on-going process of working together.

In related fashion, these large group methods of stating problems and deciding priorities often result in an inadequate level of problem formulation. In an earlier paper (Wilson, 1977), we note this distinction between descriptive statement of problems and analytical statements.

The descriptive statements merely depicit what is wrong --e.g., there is too much truancy or teachers do not work together. Anayitical statements still describe problems but go one level deeper in making judgments about the "real" problems -- e.g., on the truancy example above, the teachers teach boring classes or the parents do not value school enough to make sure their children do attend. Agreement is easier to reach on descriptive statements. These agreements may be deceptive, however, because it is the analytical statements that really function as the source of action. Organizational development approaches run more risk of accepting a spurious agreement than the approach emphasizing cognitive frameworks because the larger groups which set up priorities often fail to get beyond descriptive statements of problems. Even when they do attempt to go deeper, as in diagnosing problems, they do not focus nearly as much energy on that part of the process as do the approaches which emphasize frameworks.

Finally, organizational development approaches provide little basis for framing specific solutions. They offer structures for working on problems but then offer little guidance to help people move in any particular direction on the substantive problems that most concern them. The approach emphasizing frameworks offers both substantive guidance and structures and ties them together.

For the sake of analyzing the role of shared cognitive frameworks, we have emphasized the problems of the School Self Improvement Project. The reader is reminded that this project managed to stimulate improvement activities in schools and offers an example of a focus on organizational features other than frameworks which may be supportive of on-going improvement.

In this section we have described three projects which managed to stimulate improvement activities in urban schools. In two projects the sharing and elaboration of frameworks was a key ingredient in their success. In another project the lack of attention to frameworks was an obstaacle to its being even more successful than it was. Of course, the attention to frameworks in the first two sites was not the only feature of those settings which supported improvement. Also, we cannot be sure given our data that the improvement patterns that were started would indeed sustain themselves. The reader is urged to read the DTA case studies for more detail on these and other projects.

Section III: HOW CAN HELPERS ASSIST SCHOOL PEOPLE TO SHARE AND SYSTEMATICALLY USE COGNITIVE FRAMEWORKS

In this section we analyze our observations about what technical assistance groups (TAGs) did in the sites we studied to create situations in which the sharing and elaboration of cognitive frameworks became an established feature. We extract limits about what is necessary to be successful and identify issues that must be confronted in this work. The topics we consider are:

A. The TAG's clarity about their own frameworks and their process of praxis (refinement based on experience).

B. What kinds of credibility are necessary for effective TAG work in this area.

C. The frequency and duration of work required.

D. Voluntarism for participants.

E. What is actually done: concrete processes

1. Apprenticeship in interpreting the world according to a specific cognitive framework.

2. More formal activities - elaboration of background, heightening contradictions, and planned action, - reflection-action sequences.

Helping school people to attend to cognitive frameworks is difficult work. We believe the beneficial outcomes for schools may make the work worth the effort.

A. TAG's Clarity and Praxis

It appears that the people who are going to do this work in helping to elaborate frameworks must themselves be crystal clear about the framework.

Being able to demonstrate the power of the framework for interpreting events and guiding action is key in their work. They need to be able to articulate the framework to persons at all levels of sophistication - for example, those who have rarely thought about the world in terms of the particular framework or those who already implicitly think about the world in those terms. They need to be able to share publicly the process of thinking and planning that occurs when one has internalized the framework, a process which usually goes on privately in one's head.

They may not be very effective if they treat what they are doing as merely the expression of an idea or ill formed set of beliefs. Rather they must see it as communicating an overview of a complex system of meanings. In order to do so, they need a great deal of sophistication about how their system works. We have observed that successful TAGs emphasizing cognitive frameworks give the impression of having thought a great deal about the world from the perspective of the framework and of having already clarified some of the ambiguities and subtleties.

Furthermore, the actual method of working with people is in itself clearly reflective of the general framework. Their method of working with people in itself communicates the power of the framework. For example the advisors in the Responsive Education Project ran their sessions with school staffs with the same respect for the learner as they were hoping teachers would show students. See Lenoir, (1977) for the discussion of frameworks of practice for more on the TAG's medium needing to match the TAGs message. (See also Hyde, 1977 and Moore, Holmes, Scheppers et al, 1976, for similar

discussions of how the methods of those who would improve schools must match their guiding principles).

Paradoxically this clarity does not mean that they have all the answers. In fact, those who classically practice consciousness raising eg., the Chinese as portrayed in Fanshen (Hinton, 1966) - and other revolutionary marxists (e.g. Freire, 1967) speak of praxis as being at the core of their work. By praxis they mean the process in which the helpers' consciousness (or cognitive framework) is constantly being refined as a result of interchange with the material and social realities of their work. Thus, as the helpers aid the people they are working with to understand and use the framework, they are at the same time growing in their own understanding of the framework. Their clarity about the way the framework operates in reality is dynamic not static. We observed this reflection to be an important part of these TAG's work.

There is a major issue here which needs further research. Clarity and dynamic change can be at odds. The groups we observed seemed to have an inner core of beliefs and meanings that were not subject to change. The fundamental immutability of this core of ideas seemed to be part of the power of their approach. We need to know more about how the limits as to what can be modified are set and about what balance of unshakable conviction and openness of experience is necessary.

This tension between fundamental core ideas and openness to change is an especially important issue currently in research on facilitating school change. In a recent Rand report (Berman & McLaughlin, 1976), "mutual adaptation"* between helper and helpee is seen as key to effective technical

*Other sources also emphasize processes similar to mutual adaptation. Meara 1979 and Fullan (1972 stresses user participation in the design of projects as being essential. Johnson (1977) in another paper in this DTA cross site analysis series stresses the importance of collegial openness in the design of change projects as opposed to patron-client imposition of projects.

It is unclear to us whether the helpers' activities in our sites can best be viewed as teaching school people to adopt the helper's frameworks or as helping the school people elaborate their own frameworks. On one hand, the helpers certainly must offer some core ideas which are not subject to change; on the other hand, they do expect the school people to engage in an active process of refining the ideas to match their own particular reality. They don't allow school people to change the framework, however, to such an extent that it is unidentifiable. We suspect there must be firm lim'ts on the adaptation that is allowed.

B. Credibility of the TAG Members

The fact that the helpers are trying to have an impact on value and meaning systems rather than on some set of technical skills, means certain personal charactertics of the helpers became very important. People seem unlikely to let helpers have an influence in the personal realm of cognitive frameworks unless they have a great deal of trust and confidence. They must believe that the helpers themselves are sincere in their commitment to living in accordance with the framework and they the TAG members have demonstrated the potency of the framework by having used it to plan many of their own actions.

This need for confidence in the TAG members highlights the importance of reputation and/or long term association. This constraint may be more important in this kind of assistance work than in other kinds. The TAGS

need to convey the clear sense of being veterans of attempts to change schools in directions suggested by the framework.

In the Cultural Continuity project, key TAG members had a long history of involvement in the struggle to make public shools more responsive to Black communities. The project director had been prominent in several groups working to increase the potency of community influence. The principal investigator had built a reputation for his analysis of the family and public institutions in relation to black culture. Key members had clear and demonstrated connections to the framework. The parents and teachers they worked with had most likely heard their names or observed their presence at key events long before the project began.

Similarly, in the Responsive Education project, the staff had reputations as master teachers in the schools where they had taught. They were also known for their leadership in exploring and teaching about the learning and development framework that was fundamental to this project. The Project Director, had a national reputation and had written several popular books on schools which encouraged learning.

These observations about reputation raise some troubling questions about the generalizability and practical use of the approach we are focusing on this paper.

> -Is it only people with established credibility that can do this work? What useful role then can new helpers serve? By definition, they haven't demonstrated their expertise or commitment. Observations reveal that people new to the work can be effective as they grow in their ability to work within the framework. Somewhere close, however, there seems to be a need for someone with a reputation.

-Can a reputation simultaneously impress all the groups a TAG might want to work with? In the cultural continuity project the same staff members' history which impressed some of the parents and convinced them they wanted to work with the TAG may have scared some teachers and administrators and kept them away from the project. Similarly the reputations of the Responsive Education project staff in open education may not have had much influence on parents and teachers who were not interested in this view of education.

-Does the reputation need to be local? The key actors were directly or indirectly known to the people they were working within these projects. We suspect they were working within these projects. We suspect that this kind of change work may be much more difficult for non-local people than for locals. Credibility is easier to establish with someone known by many local people. This question needs further research.

C. The Frequency and Duration of Work

We were impressed by how often TAGs got together with the people they were working with and the length of contact required by this work. In order to have a genuine impact on the way people interpreted their world and the way these interpretations were integrated with daily action, it seemed necessary that the helpers be available at least several times a week. Both of the two projects emphasizing frameworks had helpers in the schools on a day-to-day basis. There seemed to be a sense of continuity -the school people felt that the helpers were genuinely sharing their fate. The helpers often found out about events simutaneously with the people they were working with. In important ways they were "based" at or part of the schools. The regular presence of the helpers and their eagerness to use the framework to interpret even the most mundane daily activities was a constant symbolic affirmation of the power of the framework to make daily activities more thought out and effective. A series of workshops would not have accomplished this affirmation as well as an ongoing presence. An enormous length of timne was also required. Altering and elaborating cognitive

frameworks is slow, painstaking work. People needed to move through stages and they needed different kinds of support at different levels of development. The recounting of the years of intense work in Chinese Villages in Fanshen (Hinton, 1966) give some indication of the length of involvement required. Key members of the two TAGs had been working in nearby schools for years before the NIE funding started.

These frequency and duration requirements raise serious questions about the practicality of the approach. In many ways it is an expensive approach in the amount of time and intensity required from the helpers and from the people being helped.

With such extensive requirements of time and energy we hesitate to suggest this as an easily undertaken approach to facilitating school improvement. As the next section will suggest, involvement in this elaboration of frameworks may well require some greater kind of commitment - for instance, a sense of mission or personal involvement in the school community than that required by other approaches.

It is possible, of course, that the investment of time and intensity may pay off in the long run. School people grew in their ability to use the framework. Some eventually reached the point where they were confident enough to become helpers themselves. It felt as though the groups of people being worked with were gradually moving toward needing little external help.

There are two more analytical points to be made about the time requirements. As with the concern about credibility, it may be that non-local people would have trouble being around enough to provide the constant presence required in order to impact on frameworks.

Also we wonder about the independent power of the time and duration of contact of helpers versus the approach they were using. It is possible that some of the effect comes in fact from the regular presence and demonstrated daily concern of the helpers. This issue needs further research.

D. Voluntarism

How do the helpers, themselves having made a commitment of their time and energy, persuade others to learn to explore and elaborate frameworks? Our observations at the nine sites have revealed that it is often difficult to get teachers and parents to show up for the occasional workshops or meetings that are part of other approaches, let alone for the intensive, on-going process that is part of the elaboration of cognitive frameworks. Both the Cultural Continuity and Responsive Education projects relied heavily on the concept of voluntarism.

Those teachers and parents who became involved had to chose to become involved; they had to volunteer and keep on volunteering. Neither project claimed to try to work with people who didn't want to be worked with in some way. There seemed to need to be some incipient commitment to or interest in the ideas at the heart of the frameworks even before teachers and parents entered upon the process of exploring the frameworks. These facts raise questions about how widely this kind of approach can be applied.

What good is it to work with the people who are already favorably disposed? The answer, of course, is that the process helps them to grow and to become more effective. Also, we suggest below, work with this group can lead to others becoming interested. Nonetheless, those who are concerned

about changing the public schools can pessimistically reflect that those who already have some interest in the frameworks are those least in need of being worked with. Both the Responsive Education and Cultural Continuity projects left untouched large numbers of potential participants in the settings where they worked.

Some kinds of other approaches at least give the impression of trying to reach the nonvolunteers* - for example, those where higher authorities require school people to participate, where there are modifications in structures, or where there is not so much stress on volunteerism. The School Self Improvement project sent notices to all members of different school constituencies inviting responses and participation. Meetings were held and committees were formed. Gentle persuasion may have been used to involve those who stayed away and to convey the clear message that it would be beneficial if all participated.

The School Self Improvement Project eventually reduced its push to involve everyone. It concentrated on the proportion of staff who showed interest. Nonetheless, we believe there is a critical difference between these approaches which attempt universal participation and those which consciously aim at volunteers. Those who stress the elaboration of

*This claim to reach nonvolunteers needs to be carefully scrutinized. In truth it may be that no approach genuinely affects any but those who choose to be a part of it. This history of "forced" educational innovations is rife with examples where the people being worked with went along only until the first opportunity to get out or modified what was intended by the innovators until it bore little resemblance to the original ideas. (See Ford Foundation, 1972).

frameworks realize that they can have little hope of truly involving those who are not interested. From the start, they make voluntary participation a central feature of their approach. In other approaches people can look like they're participating even if they're not. Such a semblance of participation would be difficult in an approach emphasizing frameworks.

Volunteering, of course, is not as clear cut as it seems. Both the Cultural Continuity and the Responsive Education project offered the potential participant attractions other than the frameworks. For example, the Responsive Education project offered teachers such things as assistance in particular classroom activities or some specific area of concern. Similarly, the Cultural Continuity project offered parents an understanding ombudsman in dealing with the school and a parent space. As each of these projects offered these more concrete kinds of help, they infused the atmosphere with the cognitive frameworks that were central to their approach. For example, in addition to giving the concrete help, they would give a short talk on what else they did and leave literature and other material relavent to the framework. Also they would couch all interaction with concepts from the framework - for example in acting as an ombudsman for parents they might make comments about how their view of the school's treatment of parents might help explain this particular parent's difficulty.

There was a hope that the person who had come for a limited special purpose would be intrigued by the power of what was behind this help and seek more involvement. A Salvation Army soup kitchen might provide an appropriate analogy, wherein the soup is the immediate attraction, but conversion and religious change are the underlying goal. In order for these

projects to succeed in this kind of method they needed to offer many concrete visible activities which people really perceived as help, they had to be willing to deal with people at all levels of interest, they had to understand the different levels of sophistication and foci of concern people might have, and they had to be able to relate to them.

The religious conversion analogy might be valid in another way. One major method of broadening levels of involvement in these projects seemed to be through a testimony of works. Those who were active in exploring and elaborating the guiding framework went about their business in the daily world of all those who had not become intensely involved. Hopefully the success experiences and self-assurance of those who were using the framework would entice those who had not yet been active to become involved. It is a slow process and the nagging question remains of what can be done with the people who never volunteer.

E. What is Actually Done?

From observation, we have extracted several types of activities and principles of action which seem to be typical of this approach. Someone considering using this approach in working to change schools should carefully judge the appropriateness to their own situation.

Apprenticeship in Interpreting the World Through the Cognitive Framework

The major activity seemed to involve the helpers and school people sitting down regularly together to talk about what was happening in their daily school life and in events possibly relevant to school life.

The definition of what was relevant was widened to include a great variety of current events, as described in earlier sections of this paper. Although those discussions were informal, it was clear that they were quietly guided by the helpers and the more experienced school people.

People would bring up events and topics and the group would discuss them. The helpers would infuse the conversations with their understandings. They would explain what they felt was behind these events. They would tie them in with previous theoretical discussions or with previous analyses of events. They would suggest implications of the discussions for future actions. They would challenge others' explanations. The helpers were offering the school people an apprenticeship in interpreting the world through the filter of their cognitive framework. School people were encouraged and rewarded each time they took a step to publicly interpret the world in the same way or to design actions based on those understandings. The move toward actions specifically based on the cognitive framework was clearly the ultimate goal.

More Formal Activities - Elaboration of Background, Heightening Contradictions, and Planned Action-Reflection-Action Sequences

Not all the activities were these informal "apprenticeship" discussions. The helpers undertook to structure particular kinds of experiences which would advance the group. They planned specific sessions where the basic theoretical background of the framework was presented and disscussed. These discussions moved between the abstract and the concrete. To those who practice other more structural or behavioral approaches to school

improvement, these discussions might seem too "philosophical" or irrelevant, but they were an essential part of this process of refining and elaborating frameworks. It is important to remember, though, that these discussions were embedded in a program of more experiential contact with the framework -- e.g. actually using the framework to plan actions. Merely lecturing about and discussing the framework would probably not be very effective by itself.

The helpers also used the technique of heightening contradictions. They strove to find topics and situations for the group that were a fertile ground for elaborating the frameworks. That is, the helpers seemed to believe that the careful observation of reality within the context of enough information and an analytical attitude would intrinsically lead people to see the value of the frameworks. Careful observation would reveal contradictions that would cause the observer cognitive dissonance which would result in new understandings. In this respect, the helpers were using a dialectical process similar to that used by some Marxist revolutionaries.*

For example, the Cultural Continuity Project staff would ask the parents to take trips to small local business strips in black and white communities. They would as the parents to reflect carefully on differences in what they had seen. They believed that these differences - e.g. in the condition the city kept the streets, prices on signs in the windows, etc. -- would lead parents to important insights and questions. Similarly the Responsive Education Projeect might ask teachers to observe the same child at play in the yard and at work in the classroom to note differences.

The final planned techniques we will describe are the action-reflection-action sequences that frequently occurred in these sites. The helpers were intent that the cognitive frameworks should not remain abstract and that the school people should have a lot of experience in applying the framework. Occasionally, as a result of some group sessions the helper would suggest activities that each member should do before the next meeting.

For example, in the Cultural Continuity Project parents might be asked to attend public meetings before the next session. They would be asked to observe carefully some of the maneuvers chairpeople of these meetings often make and perhaps try to counteract one of those moves. Similarly, teachers in the Responsive Education Project might be asked to design a classroom activity based on some principle the group had discussed.

Each member was then encouraged to be ready to reflect on that activity at the next meeting. Through these sequences the framework was kept in a dynamic relation to reality and the school people were impressed with the importance of tying action to the framework.

IV. CONCLUSION

Helping people to come to share a particular framework for interpreting the world and to become skillful in and committed to on-going elaboration and use of that framework is not easy work. We have shown the inordinate demands this kind of work puts on both helpers and people in school communities. We have shown how the long term impact of this concentration on frameworks is not yet clearly demonstrated.

We have been candid in confronting some of the conceptual difficulties of this approach. For example, We have identified the following: the difficulties of making a clear distinction between selling a set of ideas versus drawing out a way of seeing the world that is already implicitly present; those of sorting out whether the power of a shared framework comes from the cogency of a particular social analysis or from a process of coming to any unified agreement about how to see the world; and those of reconciling the need for a unified way of seeing the world with the pluralism and complexity of America's urban settings. Similarly we have confronted some of the practical difficulties facing helpers -- for example the need to provide an almost daily presence and the limitations of needing to work with volunteers and yet spread the impact beyond volunteers.

At the same time, however, we have hopefully conveyed some of the strength and exhilaration that a shared framework and process for using it gives to people in urban school communities. Those who have become active in the elaboration of frameworks seem to have a sense of direction and capacity. They feel they have begun to understand the manifestations and

causes of the problems that confront them and they have a sense of the course they must pursue and of a process that will help them on that path. The focus on cognitive frameworks in these sites is a feature of these school communities which will support sustained attempts toward improvement.

Similarly, while there are difficulties confronting potential helpers who would aid people in coming to share frameworks and in developing processes for on-going use of frameworks, these difficulties are not insurmountable. There are helpers out in urban school communities who <u>are</u> having some success in this kind of work and though their work is at times frustrating, it seems to be rewarding. We have tried to describe some of what seems necessary to helping school communities develop this kind of capacity for sustained problem solving. There is certainly much more to be discovered about how shared frameworks do and do not support on-going improvement attempts and about how helpers can aid school communities in elaborating frameworks.

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